

Sorensen's using STPUD's sewer system

Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley is now tapping into South Tahoe Public Utility District's sewer pipeline in Alpine County.

This was a requirement of the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board because the resort's onsite system had reached capacity.

The wastewater is treated through a subsurface percolation system. It will then be pumped into South Tahoe PUD's line to be carried down into the Indian Reservoir area. The effluent must meet the same standards STPUD has for wastewater it treats in the basin.

"Sorensen's will continue to have to demonstrate compliance through monthly testing of their effluent. If they fail, they would have to return to their onsite system until they again pass three tests in a row," Richard Solbrig, STPUD general manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Alpine County owns a small portion of the export system capacity. Sorensen's has requested to exercise that part of the agreement, which Alpine must approve.

"Note that the local water quality in the West Fork of the Carson River was being protected by Sorensen's discharging treated water from their (wastewater treatment plant) to their onsite percolation area, even if it didn't meet all of the requirements that the district's plant does, because it was much cleaner than the septic tank effluent from their pre-WWTP system," Solbrig explained.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Millions in CalFire prevention funds not spent

By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee

Amid a drought that has created bone-dry conditions across much of California's wildland area, a state fire prevention account has ended recent fiscal years with tens of millions of dollars unspent.

The money has been generated by a contentious, 4-year-old fee pushed through by Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative Democrats over the objections of Republicans and rural property owners. The state collected more than \$300 million through June and spent about \$260 million, including roughly \$228 million on administration and statewide prevention activities, vegetation clearing, defensible space inspections and other programs. About \$22 million went to a state tax agency to cover collection costs.

But as fires burned hundreds of thousands of acres this year, the state ended the fiscal year in June with an estimated \$43 million in fee money left over.

More than 800,000 property owners pay the fee, most of them \$117.33 a year for each habitable structure.

Read the whole story

More jobs and fewer people, but limp raises

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Companies have posted a record number of job openings just when a diminished proportion of Americans are either working or looking for work.

That combination ought to push up pay. Yet it hasn't worked out that way, at least not yet. Wage growth actually dipped in September.

The ongoing mystery of sluggish pay growth is important to everyone who wants a raise. It's also frustrating for the Federal Reserve, which wants to see the steady job gains of the past several years translate into higher pay. This would boost the Fed's confidence that the economy's growth is sustainable and that inflation will return to the central bank's 2 percent target.

U.S. businesses certainly seem interested in hiring. There were nearly 5.8 million open jobs at the end of July, the most since record-keeping began in 2000. At the depths of the recession in 2009, that figure was barely above 3 million.

Yet on Friday, the government's monthly jobs report showed that the percentage of people in the workforce — those who either have a job or are looking for one — reached a 38-year low of 62.4 percent.

Why? Because many Americans who were once unemployed have become discouraged, returned to school or chosen to stay home, in some cases to care for relatives. Their exodus has helped shrink the unemployment rate to a seven-year low of 5.1 percent. That's because people who aren't actively looking for a job aren't counted as unemployed.

So with fewer Americans on the hunt, employers, who face a record number of advertised jobs, should be feeling pressure to raise pay. But average wages in September rose just 2.2 percent from a year earlier, a tepid pace far below the 3.5 percent gain typical of a healthy economy.

One likely reason pay isn't growing faster, economists say, is that the low unemployment rate overstates the job market's strength. That is, some people whom the government thinks have "dropped out" and whom it no longer counts as unemployed would actually take a good job if it were available. If those people had left the workforce permanently, employers would be compelled to offer more pay to draw from a smaller pool of potential hires.

If so, this has implications for the Fed's interest-rate policies, economists say: It suggests that the Fed should keep rates lower for longer. Stronger economic growth and more robust hiring could spur more discouraged workers to look for a job. Only then might pay levels broadly increase.

Employees win right to bypass arbitration

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

Employees in California can file whistle-blower claims against their employers on behalf of themselves and their fellow workers, a federal appeals court ruled Monday in a long-sought victory for employees confronting a case-by-case, business-friendly arbitration system.

The 2-1 ruling by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in

San Francisco followed last year's California Supreme Court decision, in a separate case, allowing employees to invoke the Private Attorney General Act against employers who violate state labor laws. That law sets monetary penalties for violations – typically, \$100 per employee for each pay period of violations and \$200 per employee for repeated violations – and awards 25 percent of the money to the employees, and the rest to the state.

Employees can rely on that law, the state court said, even if their employment contract required all workplace disputes to be resolved in individual arbitrations before a private panel, with little right to appeal.

Read the whole story

Heller introduces visa waiver reforms

By Peter Urban, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON – Sen. Dean Heller introduced legislation last month that could be a boon to Nevada tourism.

In what is being billed as a “jolt” for travel-related jobs, the Nevada Republican wants to streamline the visa application system for foreign tourists seeking to visit Nevada and other tourist destinations.

The Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel should help the United States recover its shrinking share of the global travel market – potentially adding up to \$100 billion to the economy and creating nearly 700,000 jobs over the next decade, he

said.

Read the whole story

Suspect in Truckee burglary behind bars

A Truckee resident is behind bars after allegedly burglarizing his former employer.

On Oct. 2 at 4:51pm officers responded to the Fast Lane Gas Station because an ex-employee reportedly entered the store after the business was closed and stole numerous cases of cigarettes and lottery tickets.

The suspect was identified through surveillance video.

The suspect's vehicle was located Oct. 3 in the Glenshire subdivision. Officers initiated a high risk stop when the suspect left, believing he was armed. Three occupants in the vehicle were detained. No weapons were found.

The driver and burglary suspect, Anthony Criswell, 42, was arrested without incident. He was charged with burglary and possession of methamphetamine.

Passenger Mariesa Yeoman, 25, was arrested for allegedly being under the influence of a controlled substance. The second passenger was released at the scene.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Brown signs legislation to protect minorities from racial profiling and excessive force

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

In the wake of national public anger over killings by police in New York, Ferguson, Mo., and elsewhere, landmark California legislation to protect minorities from racial profiling and excessive force won Gov. Jerry Brown's signature Saturday.

At the same time, the governor issued a blunt warning against the proliferation of laws criminalizing behavior as he rejected a trio of proposals intended to bar the misuse of unmanned drones.

In a forceful veto message, Brown said lawmakers were unnecessarily complicating California's criminal code, which he said had grown to more than 5,000 provisions "covering every conceivable form of human misbehavior."

Read the whole story

Colo. skiers may be able to

pay to avoid traffic

By John Aguilar, Denver Post

Travelers on Interstate 70 in Colorado will get the chance this week to sound off on proposed toll rates on a soon-to-open express lane for ski traffic – a lane that could rank as the nation's priciest per mile.

The eastbound-only lane, designed to relieve the crushing congestion of a return trip to the city from Colorado's mountain ski resorts, is scheduled to open to vehicles in December.

Colorado Department of Transportation staff members have suggested a tolling range of \$3 to \$30 for the 13-mile stretch, which lies between the Empire exit and Central City Parkway, near Idaho Springs.

At the maximum suggested toll rate, motorists would be paying \$2.31 a mile to ride the express lane – a higher rate than any other toll road in the United States.

Read the whole story

Plastic bag manufacturers file second Calif. measure

By Associated Press

Plastic bag manufacturers filed a second ballot measure on Friday in California's fight over a statewide plastic bag ban.

The American Progressive Bag Alliance, which represents bag manufacturers, proposed an initiative that would require bag fees estimated at more than \$400 million a year go into an environmental fund rather than be kept by grocers.

California's first-in-the-nation state ban on plastic shopping bags was put on hold this year when the trade group placed the issue before voters on the November 2016 ballot.

If voters uphold the ban, grocers will be allowed to charge a fee of at least 10 cents for using paper bags.

Under the new initiative, voters will be asked to direct those fees from grocers and retailers into an environmental protection fund.

"While we are confident California voters will reject the statewide bag ban scam at the ballot in 2016, we know that 84 percent of people believe that bag fees in general should go to a public purpose, instead of increasing profit margins for grocers," said Lee Califf, executive director of the plastic bag alliance.

Supporters of the ban have criticized manufacturers for spending millions on the referendum campaign to continue selling single-use plastic bags. A message left with Californians vs. Big Plastic, a coalition of environmental, labor and business groups supporting the plastic bag ban, wasn't immediately returned Friday afternoon.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed the bag ban after one of the fiercest legislative battles of 2014, pitting bag-makers against environmentalists. It was scheduled to be phased in starting in July at large grocery stores and supermarkets as a way to cut down on litter and protect marine life.

The bag alliance said the ban will cost manufacturing jobs and boost profits for grocers, who can charge customers a premium for bags now given away for free.

Environmental activists have successfully pushed plastic bag bans in cities across the U.S., including Chicago, Seattle and Austin, Texas. Hawaii also is on track to have a de facto statewide ban, with all counties approving prohibitions.

More than 100 cities and counties in California, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, already have such bans. Several other California local governments plan to move forward with their own bans as a result of the referendum, including San Diego, Santa Barbara County, Sacramento, Oceanside and American Canyon.

Nevada eases up on fire restrictions

Fire restrictions on most public lands in Nevada have been lifted.

Campfire permits are still required in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Nevada came out of this fire season with little acreage burned, especially compared to California which is still burning in some places. Reports are that 42,000 acres were burned in the Silver State from 500 fires this year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report